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white-tawier (the verb 'to taw' meaning to dress the lighter skins of goats and kids, and then whiten them for the glover's use); Stoddard, the stot-herd, or bullock-herd, or herdsman; Palfrey, the farmer who rides his palfrey to market, — here, in the case of well-known persons, we have instances of wide departure of descendants from the trade of their ancestors.

W. S. KENNEDY.

#### A muskrat with a round tail.

It has generally been considered that the compressed, rudder-like tail, and large webbed hind-feet and bent toes, of the muskrat, form its essential distinguishing peculiarities: my surprise was therefore great to find among some specimens recently received from Mr. William Wittfeld of Georgiana, Fla., an animal, which, though resembling an ordinary muskrat in general appearance, possessed neither of these characteristics. It looked, indeed, like an overgrown and dropsical house-rat, and was at first entered in the catalogue by my assistant as a doubtful species of that genus. Its form also suggested that of a pouched rat (*Thomomys*), but unfortunately there were no pouches. An examination of the skull at once dismissed these erroneous notions, and revealed the true character of the animal. It is, without doubt, a living link binding the muskrat we know so well with the field-mouse. In size it stands between the two. Its eyes, ears, and fore-feet are those of a muskrat; but its tail and hind-feet are those of a field-mouse. I have not yet received any particulars regarding the habits of this Floridan muskrat; but the slight webbing of its toes, and their unbent condition, taken together with the rounded tail, would lead one to prophesy that it is not so thoroughly aquatic as the ordinary muskrat, probably not more so than many of the field-mice.

The ordinary muskrat has never been found in southern Florida, and it is now apparent that its place is supplied by this little relative. I may go aside to say that Florida probably still holds in its southern interior a number of creatures which the eye of science hath not seen, and which will modify the notions we have regarding those already known. As this is the scientific birth of this interesting little mammal, it is necessary that it should be given a name: I therefore christen it with the name of my friend, Mr. J. A. Allen, whose monographs of the North-American mammals are so well known and so highly esteemed; and it shall hereafter be known as *Neofiber Alleni*. I may, perhaps, be permitted to conclude by summing up briefly the characters of the species, in order that there may be no mistake regarding the appearance of the animal.

*Neofiber Alleni*. — General form and color, head, eyes, ears, and fore-legs as in *F. zibethicus*. Hind-feet not exceeding twice the fore-feet in length, with straight, slightly webbed toes, and naked soles. Tail round, scaled, and sparsely covered with dull-brown hairs. Length of head and body, 20.2 centimetres; tail, 12.7 centimetres; hind-foot (without claws), 3.9 centimetres.

FREDERICK W. TRUE.

U. S. national museum, Washington,  
June 30.

#### Fish-remains in the North-American Silurian rocks.

The English Ludlow Rocks have long been known as the lowest horizon from which undoubted remains of fish have been obtained. The 'bone-bed' of this group has yielded several species. The earliest

known American fossil fish occur in the lower Devonian beds of Ohio (corniferous) and in the Gaspé sandstones of the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

But some fossils have, during the past year, come into my possession, a glance at which is suggestive of near relationship to the peculiar forms of the English Ludlow Rocks. Close examination has confirmed this opinion, and abundantly proved that fish existed on this continent as early as in England. Indeed, should the whole evidence I have obtained be equally valid, it will sustain the conclusion that we have here more ancient ichthyic forms than any yet known elsewhere.

I have entered a paper on the subject for the approaching meeting of the British association at Montreal, when the facts on which these conclusions rest will be given in detail.

E. W. CLAYPOLE.

Buchtel college, Akron, O., July 2.

#### Babirussa tusks from an Indian grave in British Columbia.

Many curious and unlooked-for objects are frequently found in Indian graves, and not least among these is a pair of the tusks of the Babirussa. They were extracted in August of last year by Mr. James S. Swan from the grave of an old Indian doctor at Kah-te-lay-juk-te-wos Point, near the north-western end of Graham Island, one of the Queen Charlotte Islands, off the coast of British Columbia. The Babirussa, as every one knows, is an animal of the hog tribe, inhabiting only Celebes and the adjacent islands. The question then arises, How did these teeth come into the possession of the Indian doctor, who died some fifty years since at an advanced age?

Mr. Swan suggests an ingenious and plausible solution of the problem. In his letter of the 4th of January to Professor Baird, he writes as follows: "Lieut. Bolles, of the U. S. surveying schooner Ernest, tells me that the Siamese junks make regular trading-voyages to the coast of Africa, even as far as the Cape of Good Hope, running down with the north-east monsoons, and returning when the favorable monsoon blows. They bring products of every kind, and trade with Japan and China. He thinks that some of these junks may have been wrecked, and carried by the Japanese current to the American side, and perhaps cast ashore on the west coast of the Queen Charlotte Islands, where quantities of drift-stuff of every kind is to be found."

"Charles Wolcott Brooks, in his able report on Japanese vessels wrecked in the North Pacific Ocean, read before the Californian academy of sciences, March 1, 1876, says, 'Every junk found adrift or stranded on the coast of North America, or on the Hawaiian or adjacent islands, has, on examination, proved to be Japanese, and no single instance of any Chinese vessel has ever been reported.'

"One of these junks was wrecked on the Queen Charlotte Islands in 1831, and numerous others have been wrecked on other parts of the north-west coast. The tusks of the Babirussa were undoubtedly an article of commerce among a people who would be likely to use them for carving or for manufacturing into fancy articles, and it is not improbable that the tusks in question were procured from some one of these old Japanese wrecks."

It is difficult to conceive of another origin for these tusks. The commerce of California fifty years ago was of a very limited character, and Babirussa tusks are among the objects least likely to have been sent there through any regular channel.

F. W. TRUE.

U. S. national museum, Washington, D.C.,  
July 3.